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The Destructive Effects of Water Pollution

Summer has arrived. The young boy and his father’s annual tradition of going fishing on his birthday is going to be different this year. Due to recent effects of an oil spill numerous amounts of fish and other marine life have been killed. The state ordered that no one can fish until the population of the fish increases. The devastated boy’s tradition with his father is impossible to keep alive.

 One may ask, “What causes water pollution?” Things we consider luxuries such as an annual holiday cruise can cause damage and pollutions to our water.. “In one week a typical cruise ship generates 210,000 gallons of sewage, more than eight tons of solid waste and toxic wastes from common onboard operations” (Water Pollution Facts). Water pollution can be caused by many other different factors. Oil spills and human and animal wastes can cause water pollution. The water can also be polluted from runoff after a rainstorm that washes chemicals, such as fertilizers from farms, into the water. Mining activities and landfills can also pollute the water since about 210 million gallons of petroleum enter the sea each year worldwide. 1.2 trillion gallons of untreated sewage, storm water, and industrial waste are discharged into United State’s waters every year. Roughly 25 percent of beaches close due to water pollution on any given year. Furthermore, “about 20 percent of the land based petroleum that enters North American coastal waters ends up in the Gulf of Mexico” (Grinning Planet). Water pollution is mainly caused by things we think benefit us such as mining activities and fertilizers.

Many people tend to believe water pollution only occurs in third world countries, but actually it unknowingly happens in front of our very own eyes. Water pollution can affect people in two ways. One way is directly, where you physically come in contact with water and causes illnesses. The second way is indirectly, which is caused by the consumption of food, most commonly sea life such as fish. Water pollution can cause diseases in fish and other marine life. Humans can become sick by eating the diseased marine life. Each year plastic waste in water and coastal areas kills up to 100,000 marine life, one million sea birds, and countless amounts of fish (Water Pollution Facts). Water can also become contaminated and cause extremely harmful diseases in humans. These diseases would lead to high medical bills and very likely lead to death. Each year, roughly 250 million cases of diseases are caused by water pollution, resulting in five to ten million deaths. Examples of diseases from polluted beach water can be diarrhea, vomiting, stomach aches and cramps, respiratory infections. Polluted water can also lead to damages to the liver, kidney, and nervous system. An increase in polluted water can also cause more breeding grounds for mosquitoes that can carry malaria, a deadly disease. Some less harmful effects of polluted beach water can be rashes, ear aches, and pink eye (Water Pollution Facts).

In addition, some water pollution can lead to “dead zones”. Dead zones, like the one in the Gulf of Mexico, can be caused by nutrients from farms entering the water that boost the growth of algae. The dead zone in the Gulf of Mexico is located from the beginning of the Mississippi River Delta and ends at the upper Texas coast (CNN). The algae consume large amounts of oxygen, creating a large space where no marine life can survive. The marine life, in result of the dead zone, comes closer to shore to be able to live and breathe and also to escape the dead zone. This is extremely harmful when dangerous marine life comes close to shore, because they can be harmful to humans. As the pollution of water increases, so does the dead zone. In 2012 the dead zone in the Gulf of Mexico was 2,889 square miles, which is larger than the entire state of Delaware. Most of the pollution that causes this specific dead zone is the Mississippi River which carries an estimated 1.5 million metric tons of nitrogen pollution (CNN).

 An example of a famous water pollution tragedy is the B.P. Oil Spill. After the BP Oil Spill on April 20, 2012, the White House said that it was the greatest environmental disaster the United States has faced. Workers and marine life died due to the oil spill. Water in the Gulf instantly became toxic because it only takes one quart of oil to make 250,000 gallons of water toxic. The United States lost money and incredible amounts of oil and also had to pay workers to stop. The BP Company paid a 4.5 billion dollar fine due to the oil spill (Popular Mechanics). Fisherman, local restaurants and businesses lost their jobs and lost money because the beaches were covered in tar and they were unable to catch seafood to sell and eat. The BP oil spill leaked 205.8 million gallons of oil, wasting 397.7 million dollars’ worth of oil. In other words, “One could drive a Toyota Prius 184,181 times around the Earth using the lost oil” (The Deepwater Horizon Spill by the Numbers). The BP tragedy is a form of water pollution that has greatly affected the Gulf Coast region. It should be a motivator for those who live on the Gulf Coast to prevent further water pollution.

One easy way to reduce water pollution is to remember to never litter in the water or on land. One can join clubs and organizations such as CCA, or Coastal Conservation Association, to help protect our coast. In addition, do not overuse chemicals and fertilizers outside and always watch what you flush down your toilets. It is always a good thing to pick up trash in, or near, a body of water. Do not over water your plants because this may cause the fertilizers to flow into nearby water sources. It is never too late to try and help the environment. No one wants to swim in trash and chemicals at the beach, so be smart and do you part to help the environment.

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